

I worked at a 1000-watt local radio station (Saint Joseph, MI) in the mid-1970s. When our license came up for renewal, I participated in 'community interviewing'. I remember our GM's talk with those of us who would be interviewing the general public. I clearly remember the phrase "ascertain the significant problems and needs of the community".

Our station (and many others in that day) aired a daily local call-in show. Today talk radio is big, but I know of no local call-in program. I remember religious and community affairs programming typically aired on Sunday mornings and evenings, and to a lesser extent, Saturday mornings. Most of this is gone now. I also remember that we ran public service announcements and spots throughout the day. (If you are less than 40 years old you won't remember the spots, because radio stations don't do it anymore.)

I remember also the equal-time rule, and the debate that created. Maybe it wasn't the best way to deal with the issue, but when I listen to political coverage on the radio (yes, even local coverage); I'd like to have the equal-time rule back.

Saint Joseph and Benton Harbor had two locally owned radio stations when I was growing up. Ours was a 1000-watt station and the other was a 5000-watt. There was a fierce competition for advertising, yet they both served a market segment of the community, and both survived. A few years ago the 5000-watt station was sold to a licensee in South Bend Indiana, 30 miles away. Since South Bend is close enough to clearly receive the station, the owner changed our radio station into a South Bend ("Michiana") radio station. To listen now, one wouldn't know it's a local station in our own town.

Today, everywhere on the commercial radio dial, everything is the same: same music, same talk programs, same trash. The concept of the airwaves being a 'public trust' has disappeared. Most broadcasters market to the lowest common denominator, to maximize their profits. So when I first read about LPFM, I was excited. Finally, there was going to be a way to have local, grassroots radio again! But the big corporate broadcasters fought it because they want exclusive control of the airwaves. They do not want local control.

A generation of Americans don't know that the airwaves used to belong to them. The FCC must take some philosophical steps backward. Owners have been abusing the public trust ever since the FCC entrusted them to serve the public voluntarily. They must be re-regulated. Please enact rules that benefit the public -- not just the broadcast owners. Let us once again make owners serve the community instead of merely profiting from it.

Thank you.